

Inspector is to choose what set he pleases. Standards V. and VI. require only a slight change in the matter of analysis, and the restriction to the last period of history of the more intimate knowledge required.

5. While I am anxious to pay a compliment to the general intelligence of those members of our School Committees whom I have met and the interest they have shown in the working of the schools, I am of opinion that the practically dual government by Boards and Committees is cumbrous and inefficient, especially in the matter of school organization; and I therefore propose that the functions of our present Committees reside in single commissioners appointed annually by the Boards, or so appointed in the first instance, and afterwards on the recommendation of a majority of the parents or guardians of the children attending the schools, the members of the Boards being themselves elected by popular vote on some basis combining the principles of territorial and numerical representation.

I have, &c.,

W. J. ANDERSON,

Inspector of the South Canterbury Board of Education.

Inspector-General of Schools, Wellington.

WESTLAND.

Mr. SMITH.

SIR,—

Hokitika, 4th March, 1885.

I have to apologize for having so long delayed replying to your circular of the 6th January. My excuse is that my appointment as Secretary and Inspector under the new Westland Board has caused my time to be so fully occupied that I have been unable hitherto to give the circular the attention its importance demands.

*History.*—First, with regard to history, I am decidedly in favour of making this a class-subject, and I think it might be omitted from Standard III. with great advantage. History has always been the stumblingblock of this standard. The mere selection of a few of the more interesting facts from the whole range of the subject—from Julius Cæsar to Victoria—has always been regarded as a most embarrassing task, and, even when accomplished, the result is of little educational value, as with such young children and with so wide a range, the most that can be done in the limited time that can be devoted to the subject is to load the children's memories with a catalogue of dry and, to them, unintelligible facts. By selecting a suitable text-book—such as the Junior Royal History—and using it alternately with the ordinary reading-book, the salient points of English history might be easily and intelligently taught in three years in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Standards. I should be sorry, however, to see this subject altogether abandoned, even if the Act did not require it to be taught.

*Geography.*—This, I think, might be with advantage made a class-subject in Standards II. and III., remaining a pass-subject in the others. The fact of its being necessary to a “pass” in the Fourth and higher Standards would insure its receiving attention in the lower, as, if neglected in them, there would be less probability of scholars passing when they reach the Fourth. Of course, too, the Inspectors would make it their business to see that a proper amount of attention had been given to it in the earlier stages. I should certainly deprecate its entire relegation to Regulation IX.

*Grammar and Composition.*—I most emphatically object to the proposal to make these (more especially composition) class-subjects. An argument in favour of this proposal is sometimes heard to the effect that many well-educated men, as well as correct and elegant writers, never saw the inside of an English grammar. But this has little or no weight, when we consider that the majority of the children attending elementary schools do not enjoy the advantage which these persons most probably had, of hearing good English habitually spoken from their earliest infancy. It is true that an intimate knowledge of the rules of grammar is seldom effectual in causing the children of uneducated parents to speak correctly, the force of habit and association being too powerful; but I have had abundant opportunities of observing that, although it is exceedingly difficult to accomplish this, yet the most incorrigible transgressors in speech, who have had the advantage of attending the best of our common schools, frequently express themselves in writing with tolerable grammatical propriety, and, when challenged as to some breach of grammar in their conversation, are able to correct it, and to give a satisfactory reason for the correction. In this district particularly, where people from every nation under heaven have settled down and intermarried, the importance of keeping this subject under Regulation VII. cannot be a matter of doubt. To place it under Regulation IX. would be to render more or less optional a subject which has been described by a competent authority as “the best study for drawing out the intelligence of the children.” The same author (Robert Robinson, Inspector of Schools, Ireland) says, “Grammar is more purely intellectual than arithmetic,” and he quotes the following from the Minutes of Council on Education, 1848–49: “Grammar accustoms the mind to reflect more than any other department of primary instruction whatever.” Fully acquiescing in these opinions, I heartily hope that no effort to remove this subject from Regulation VII. will be successful.

Referring again to history and geography, you very truly remark that, “If elementary science and drawing are diligently taught in the majority of schools, it will be reasonable to conclude that these subjects would not suffer if placed under Regulation IX.” The converse, however, does not necessarily follow, since the omission (at present) of science and drawing may, and often does, arise from the inability of the teachers to undertake them; and this could scarcely happen in the case of history or geography.

With regard to the proposal of the Royal Commission on Technical Education, I think the suggestion is reasonable and practicable as far as the work prescribed for the Fourth Standard in drawing; but, if carried on to geometrical and perspective drawing, the majority of the present generation of teachers in this district would find it almost impossible to obtain the necessary amount of instruction themselves to justify the attempt to teach the subject to others. In the great centres of population